

# Child Maltreatment

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- Any acts of **commission** or **omission** by a parent, caregiver or adult that result in:  
harm,  
potential for harm  
or threat of harm to a child (<18yrs)

# Forms of maltreatment

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- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional (psychological) abuse
- Neglect

Frequency of Maltreatment?

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- Police reports  
Underestimate the problem+++
- Investigating agencies  
Underestimate the problem++ (only 5% of Physical,  
8% of Sexual Abuse)  
Especially in younger children
- Self reporting
  - ? Embarrassed, denial, misunderstanding

# Frequency of Maltreatment?

- Investigating agencies

USA 4.78% children investigated

2006 1.21% substantiated

Neglect 60%

Phys Abuse 10%

Xple 12%

Psych Abuse 11%

Sex Abuse 7%

- Self reporting

- 1 in 30 Physical abuse, 5-10% girls penetrative SA  
1- 5% boys

All forms of abuse 3-33%

# Neglect

- Failure to protect
- Failure to provide

Often Xple siblings - unlike other types of abuse



# Who are victims of Maltreatment

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- Girls

SA, infanticide, neglect, housework

Boys

Physical abuse, employment

Street kids,

Institutionalised kids,

Disabled kids and slow learners

Step children, single parent, poor children

Who are the perpetrators?

# Who are the perpetrators?

- Socio economic inequalities
- Displaced people
- Alcohol/ drug users
- Victims of abuse in childhood
- Observers of intimate partner violence
- But

*Anybody at any strata of society*

*Teachers?, health workers? Priests?*

Long term effects of abuse?

# Long term effects of abuse?

- HIV and other STIs
- Low education and skill achievement
- Behaviour problems
- Post traumatic stress syndrome
- Depression
- Suicide
- Self injury
- Alcohol/drug dependence
- Prostitution
- Teenage pregnancy
- Obesity and other eating disorders
- Chronic pain
- Health care use++
- Quality of life
- Criminal behaviour

# Who recognises and reports ?

• Teachers	SWEDEN 16%	MALAWI ?
• Law enforcers	15%	++
• Social workers	10%	
• Medical staff	8%	
• Day care workers	1%	
• Mental health institutions	4%	
• Anonymous	8%	
• Parent	6%	++
• Friend	8%	
• Victim	0.6%	

• SHOULD REPORTING BE MANDATORY ?

# Physical abuse

Intentional use of physical force or implements against a child that results in harm or has potential to harm

- Hitting, beating, stabbing, biting, punching, throwing, pulling, shaking, strangling, smothering, burning, scalding, poisoning
- Is it over chastisement or abuse?
- What about excess labour around the home?



# Physical abuse

## How do we recognise it?

- Odd story
- Changing story
- Unusual injury - site, shape, type
- Different ages of injuries
- Delay in presentation
- Child never left to give own story
- Abnormal behaviour of child towards adults

# Sexual Abuse

Any completed or attempted sexual act or contact or non contact sexual interaction with a child by a care giver

- **Penetration** - between mouth, penis, vulva, anus of child and another individual
- **Contact** - intentional touching of genitalia, buttocks or breasts with or without clothes (excluding normal care);
- **Non contact** - exposure to sexual activity, filming, prostitution.

# Sexual Abuse

## How do we recognise it?

- Contact / non contact: History
- Penetration: History and Examination
  - Full history
  - Full exam - especially mouth,  
evidence of forcefully held  
genitalia  
anus
- *Remember that penetration does not = evidence*
- *Remember that injuries to anus and vulva heal ++*

# Psych or emotional abuse

Deliberately made to feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, only valued as meeting another's needs.

- Continuous or episodic

Belittling, blaming, degrading, intimidating, terrorising, isolating etc

Insensitive to a child's physical, emotional and developmental needs

Allowing to witness intimate partner violence

# Psych or emotional abuse

## How do we recognise it?

Behaviour problems

Poor schooling

Soiling, bedwetting

Anxiety, depression

Aggression

Eating disorders

Failure to thrive                      etc

# Neglect

Failure to meet basic physical, emotional, medical dental, educational needs.  
Failure to provide adequate nutrition, hygiene, shelter,  
Failure to ensure safety

- Failure to thrive
- Apathy, depression
- Frequent minor or major injuries
- Grubby, skin sores,
- Solitary, poor at school etc

# Our job?

- To diagnose
- To treat
- To prevent - further problems  
recurrent problems  
worse problems
- To protect - by communicating, by careful documentation  
other children
- To advocate - MoH, MoE, MoJ

**We are not the judge and jury**